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Atari Online News, Etc.
A-ONE Online Magazine
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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
"""""""""""""""""""""""""""""

Happy Thanksgiving, a day late. We had a nice, quiet celebration again this year. It was just my wife and I - and of course, our two dogs. Everyone enjoyed the turkey and all of the fixings (I make a damn great turkey!). All of us here at A-ONE hoped that you all had an enjoyable holiday with family and friends - plenty of good food and a football game or two!

Until next time...

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Firebee Update News

Here's a quick update.

FireBee.org is proud to announce that our goal of 50 pre-orders for the second run of Firebee Computers has been reached. This week we reached 55 pre-orders. More information will be announced soon on what will be the next step in the process.

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->In This Week's Gaming Section - PlayStation 2 Emulation Heading to PS4!
""""""""""""""""""""""""""""""" Happy 10th Birthday, Xbox 360!
Meet The New Atari!
And more!

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Sony Is Adding PlayStation 2 Backwards Compatibility to the PS4

Sony and Electronic Arts have a Star Wars: Battlefront PlayStation 4 bundle available right now and with it comes a quartet of games from a long time ago and a galaxy far, far away (or at least as far as the PlayStation 2 era). Star Wars: Bounty Hunter, Star Wars: Jedi Starfighter, Star Wars Racer: Revenge and Super Star Wars come with the bundle via a single download code, and all bar one appear to be the original PS2 games running in emulation. The discovery comes via the tech-minded folks over at Digital Foundry who spotted a number of clues suggesting backwards compatibility had finally arrived. The evidence is in the details. As DF noted, the sophomore console's select and start buttons have been mapped to either side of the DualShock 4's touchpad, something only Sony, rather than Lucasarts Interactive can do.

Oh, and there's an even bigger giveaway: a PS2 logo appears when you launch each game. Need more proof? "All in-game button prompts" are relative to the DualShock 2 which means these aren't remastered versions of the games. So, local emulation of classic games so long as you download them, and there's no monthly subscription fee. Sounds familiar, right? We're expecting a Star Wars-themed package in the mail from EA tomorrow so perhaps this is what that is. We've reached out to Sony for more information about the backwards compatibility and will update this post should the company respond.

Update: And just like that, Sony has confirmed backwards compatibility is coming, telling Wired: "We are working on utilizing PS2 emulation technology to bring PS2 games forward to the current generation ... We have nothing further to comment at this point in time."

PlayStation 2 Emulation Heading to PS4

Sony has confirmed that PlayStation 2 emulation is coming to the PlayStation 4.

"We are working on utilizing PS2 emulation technology to bring PS2 games forward to the current generation," a Sony representative told Wired. "We have nothing further to comment at this point in time."

The confirmation comes after Eurogamer earlier this week discovered PS2 emulation. The site's Richard Leadbetter noticed that three Star Wars games that came bundled with Star Wars Battlefront were from the PS2-era but didn't appear to be ports made specifically for the PS4. They were in fact running on proprietary emulation software.

Currently, the only way to play classic games on PlayStation 4 is

through the PlayStation Now streaming app, or by playing a remastered title. With Microsoft launching Xbox 360 backwards compatibility for the Xbox One earlier this month, it’s obvious that users are hungry to play older games, and Sony is jumping on that bandwagon.

It seems odd that Sony would release this news with such little fanfare, though. Compare this announcement to the one Microsoft made about backwards compatibility during its E3 event, which kicked off the presentation to thunderous applause.

Sony’s confirmation doesn’t give us a lot of information to go on, but we’ll be hearing more about this in the future. Many questions still linger, however, such as how this technology works, whether or not PS2 disks can be used to download games like they can on Xbox One, and what the pricing of titles will be. Stay tuned for more news on this as it develops.

Happy 10th Birthday, Xbox 360!

Microsoft s most successful home console just turned 10.

Launched on November 22, 2005, the Xbox 360 had a busy decade. The system brought multiplayer gaming to the forefront of the console world, demonstrated that game systems could do a lot more than play games, sucked us in with its addictive Achievements, and hosted some of the biggest games in the industry’s history.

But it didn’t get off to a great start.

Rather than unveiling the system at a game industry trade show or news conference, Microsoft opted to debut the Xbox 360 on MTV in a show hosted by Elijah Wood. Even by 2005 standards, it was a painful thing to watch. It featured odd cameos from The Killers, the Pimp My Ride crew, and Lil’ Jon. A model strutted through the crowd with a courier bag before plopping the system on a pedestal. Wood uttered the phrase "uber-gamers" and made shadow puppets in front of Xbox 360 artwork.

Things got worse once the system was in the wild. The Xbox 360 s launch lineup was uninspired, and the infamous "Red Ring of Death" rendered thousands of consoles useless, forcing Microsoft to repair units free of charge.

"I calculated with my finance team [a cost of] $1.15 billion," Peter Moore, who ran the Xbox division at the time, told Gamespot. "I ... sat in front of Steve [Ballmer, then CEO of Microsoft], who I love to death, but he can be an intimidating human being. And Steve said, ’OK, talk me through this.’ "I said, ’If we don’t do this, this brand is dead.’"

Over time, though, the Xbox 360 began to thrive. Led by huge exclusive franchises like Halo, Gears of War, Fable and Forza, the software lineup soon found its groove. Valve’s vaunted shooters Left 4 Dead and The Orange Box bypassed the PlayStation 3 and called the 360 home. Games like Dance Central made the Kinect peripheral cool (for a while, at least). Beyond

exclusives, Microsoft also worked with third-party publishers to get first dibs on DLC for the biggest games of the time, including Call of Duty and Grand Theft Auto, further luring gamers to the system.

Some of the system s biggest contributions had more to do with how you play games rather than the games themseves. The introduction of Achievements and Gamerscores, essentially adding rewards (and bragging rights) for playing, was a master stroke that would be emulated by both Sony and Apple.

For many, it was Xbox Live that made the Xbox 360 so appealing. While Microsoft had dabbled in online play with the original Xbox, the 360 was a truly connected machine, making it easy to find your friends online, invite them to join you in a game, and voice chat with them as you played.

Perhaps the greatest achievement of the Xbox 360, though, had nothing to do with gaming at all. For decades, console manufacturers had been positioning their systems as living room Trojan Horses: Gamers would hook them up to play games, but the real shelf life would be found in other entertainment capabilities. The Xbox 360 was the first to really embody that trend, becoming usable not only by gamers, but by non-gaming members of the family.

It started with an exclusive deal with Netflix, which allowed Xbox Live subscribers to freely watch movies from the then-burgeoning streaming service. Other services, including Hulu, YouTube, UFC, and MLB.tv later became available. The Xbox Music service offered an unlimited music streaming option in a pre-Spotify world. Towards the end of the console’s time in the spotlight, cable services, including AT&T Uverse, offered set-top box functionality via the system, while others, such as Xfinity and Verizon FiOS, tied into the Xbox 360 with their on-demand services.

As of June 2014, the Xbox 360 had sold 84 million units worldwide, good enough to make it the sixth best-selling game system ever (fourth if you don’t count handhelds). While it’s no longer discussed at press conferences and publishers are slowly dropping the system from new releases of key franchises, it remains a consistent source of revenue for Microsoft. (Publisher support is expected to continue at least through next year.)

Though it wasn’t their first, the Xbox 360 was the system that made Microsoft a real player in the video game space. The original Xbox had plenty to crow about, but it often felt like an experiment as the company worked its way through unfamiliar industry (and was outsold 5 to 1 by the unstoppable PlayStation 2). With the 360, Microsoft matured, got a handle on what gamers wanted, and learned how to move beyond what could have been crippling mistakes.

Those are lessons that it’s still implementing today, and while the Xbox One is currently in the rearview mirror of the PlayStation 4, it’s outpacing the Xbox 360’s early sales, perhaps a sign that once again Microsoft doesn’t plan to let a bad start ruin its overall run.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Meet The New Atari

Though Atari was one of the founding fathers of the games industry, for many it will always be synonymous with the video games crash of 1983.

The firm s fast and loose approach to publishing, and its lack of quality control, was so severe that it killed faith in the sector resulting in a market collapse in the US.

Since then, the name has passed through a number of hands, including Tramel Technology, Hasbro, Infogrames and IESA.

Then in 2009, Atari parent company Infogrames rebranded itself as Atari SA.

The once dominant brand has seen its worth diminish during the years, to the point when, in 2013, three of Atari s subsidiaries filed for bankruptcy. Re-emerging wounded, but still alive.

The Atari of today is a different beast to the one of old, with the firm now comprised of less than twenty people.

The brand has gone through a lot of ups and downs, a lot of big ups and big downs, Atari SA CEO Fred Chesnais tells MCV.

These days, Atari s status is very simple we ve picked up the mess of 2013, we exited bankruptcy, we are now profitable. It s still a very small company, if you look at the numbers you ll see there s nothing to write home about.

But the brand is still here, it s untarnished, it s still very popular. We re still doing a lot of licensing agreements that generate millions of dollars. For instance, during the first six months of this fiscal year, we have entered into licensing deals in the casino space and it s taken over $1m dollars.

We re branching out of the game business. We have entered into licensing agreements in the movie space and we re working in the TV sector through licensing and co-productions.

It s clearly a brand for the generations. We get loads of calls asking us to licence the Atari brand.

In another 18 months, our goal is to be in really good shape with our games, and we ll be able to show good progress outside of the games business, too. We re trying to branch out of games because it s a very complicated sector and frankly, you can make a lot of

mistakes in that market.

"We do care about these brands
and are really trying to pay attention
to what the community is saying."

Fred Chesnais, Atari

Yep, this new Atari has made its fair share of mistakes. The firm launched a new Asteroids game into Early Access in March of this year. Entitled Outpost (pictured below), this was a survival game akin to Minecraft or Rust.

Then in June, the publisher released Alone in the Dark: Illumination, a team-based shooter where players were neither alone nor in the dark. Both games faced severe criticism from both video game journalists and consumers.

We make mistakes in video games, Chesnais says.

So first and foremost, we read what the fans say and we always try to bring the games to the next level. We read what they are writing in the forums and we always try to improve the situation. Each game has its own story and history.

With Asteroids, for instance, the idea was to start with a solo experience and keep adding to it. The fans did not respond to that.

On Alone in the Dark, the game is very stable but people didn t like the gameplay. They were asking us why it was a shooter and they were telling us it was too repetitive. We re working on addressing that. This isn t a situation where a game is released and we say: Hey, it s out ; and then we clean up and don t care about it. We do care about these brands, we are really, really trying to pay attention to what the community is saying and to do our best.

You are only as good as your last game. That s the problem and also the beauty of our industry. We are just very mindful of what the fans are writing and we don t do it on purpose.

Atari certainly appears to be trying, if its recent Rollercoaster Tycoon game is anything to go by. The publisher has changed the development studio working on Rollercoaster Tycon World twice. The firm initially had Pipeworks developing the title, before handing the game to Area 52 after quality concerns. Atari then gave the reigns to Nvizzio Creations, again citing quality.

"The main issue with new IP is standing out.
That s why we brought the Atari name back."

Fred Chesnais, Atari

Looking at Atari s recent releases Alone in the Dark Illumination and Asteroids: Outpost many might think that the firm is just looking through its portfolio of existing IP and attempting to revive them with modern stylings. But Chesnais says that it is looking into new IP, too.

We have launched a game for the LGBTQ community, Pridefest, which is a new IP, he explains. We thought it was interesting, and something for a community that s underserved when it comes to interactive experiences.

However, Chesnais says that Atari s main focus will be on its existing brands.

We have more than 200 games in our portfolio, Chesnais explains.

On the App Store you have thousands of games. The main issue you have with new IP is standing out, so people will notice your game.

That s why we brought the Atari name back, to exploit the portfolio of IP. We ll see a title s gameplay, think it s interesting, and ask ourselves if there s a brand in our portfolio that we could match to that by making a game of that style. Asteroids: Outpost is a very good example of what we are trying to do, even if we have failed on this one.

We are not very happy with the results on that, but it s better for us to take very innovative gameplay and then try to see if we can match it to an existing brand.

There s Nothing Like M.U.L.E. on an Atari 800 To Bring A Family Together

On holidays like Thanksgiving, part of the togetherness (especially with my older brother) has always included video games especially games for our first computer, the Atari 800.

Released in 1979, Atari intended the 800 (and its junior sibling, the 400) to serve as both advanced follow-ups to its successful Atari 2600 game console and, in the case of the 800, as a competitor to the Apple II. But the Atari 2600 held its ground, remaining commercially relevant until at least 1986, and the Apple II, well, you know.

The Atari 800 was a unique hybrid of personal computer and gaming machine.

Think of the Atari 800 as a hybrid between a game console and a personal computer. Advanced custom silicon betrayed its origins as a potent gaming machine. Chief among them were the ANTIC and GTIA graphics chips, which granted the sophisticated sprite controls (among other functions), and the POKEY chip, which could output four audio channels simultaneously for complex (at the time) musical capabilities.

POKEY also managed all player input to the system, allowing up to eight paddles or four joysticks at a time. That made the Atari 800 a very special multiplayer machine.

The Atari 800 had four ports for joysticks or paddles.

Of the small number of games that supported using all four controller ports, my brother and I owned and played most of them. In Asteroids, players can blast globby space rocks (or each other)

four-at-once. Atari Basketball? Two-on-two on the digital blacktop. And Super Breakout? Oh my: If you hooked four paddle pairs to all of the ports, you could have eight people playing onscreen. It was an absolute blast.

But we must reserve the multiplayer crown for the king of all Atari four-player games: M.U.L.E. Designed by the legendary Dani Bunten and published by Electronic Arts in 1983, this turn-based resource-trading title was never a runaway bestseller, but it quickly became a critically acclaimed computer game. M.U.L.E. combines equal parts depth and dexterity, chiefly from its boardgame-like strategy elements and its four-player, real-time auction sequence. Players move their characters up or down on the screen at the same time to set a buy or sell price. There can be a fair amount of bluffing involved, keeping everyone on their toes.

M.U.L.E combined boardgame-like strategy with twitch-speed multiplayer dynamics.

Boy did my brother love M.U.L.E. One of my earliest memories of the game involves one of his birthday parties. He was probably turning nine, so I would have been four years old and as eager to be included in whatever the big kids were doing, as they were to keep me out.

On that day, I heard joyous shouting and laughing coming from his room. I pushed open the closed door (as in, keep out, no little brothers allowed): The glorious tones of the M.U.L.E. theme song emanated from a color TV propped up on his desk.

My brother and three friends each clutched a black Atari controller, and I watched as he started up a game on the hardest Tournament setting. I lurked at the back of the room, mostly unnoticed, as the game engrossed the crowd.

The legendary game M.U.L.E. commanded the attention of nine-year-old boys for astonishingly long periods of time.

The entire play-through likely lasted only 30-45 minutes of real time, but it felt like a brilliant eternity. In the age of twitch games like Asteroids, where you frequently got blasted away within 30 seconds, 30 minutes was an epic commitment of time and attention span for a kid. The fact that M.U.L.E. kept a room full of nine-year-olds glued to the screen for that long meant it was truly something special.

I ve played M.U.L.E. many times since then. Throughout the 1990s, my brother and I hooked up the 800 every Christmas and played the classics. We still manage it most years to this day.

Playing Atari 800 games became a holiday tradition for the author’s family.

This year, I decided to pull a Benj and set up M.U.L.E. once again but at my parents house, for the most retro feeling possible.

The centerpiece would be our family s old woodgrained RCA TV set. Hailing from a time when people built TV sets to look like

furniture, it saw non-stop daily service until 2006, when it finally lost out to an HDTV.

I knew it was too important a family artifact to discard, so I tucked it away in the darkest corner of my parents garage. I dug out the old, 100-something-pound set and cleaned off all six of its spiderweb-encrusted sides. Then I stuck it in the traditional TV corner in the den at her house and hooked it up.

 What could make this look more 80s? I asked my mom. She brought in a basket of fake flowers, which she set down on an antique children s chair. Then she placed an old wooden duck on top of the TV, and I found a vintage brass lamp. Instant country-style decor, 1980s-style. My mom s favorite.

I also rounded up a Betamax player a friend gave me (sadly, our original VHS VCR met the scrap heap long ago), a Zenith cable box that s just like the one we used back in the day, and an old clock. Finally I hooked up the Atari 800, put in the M.U.L.E. disk, and threw the switch.

Gaming, back in the day: Atari 800 with four joysticks attached to a 1983-era wood-grained TV.

My face lit up with joy as I heard the first few beats of the triumphant M.U.L.E. theme song play through the vintage TV set.

To me, history is as close as we can come to time travel. These artifacts are cues that pull up powerful memories. People who say, don t live in the past obviously didn t own an Atari.

I plugged in four bona-fide Atari controllers and played through a beginner-level game against three computer players because, well, it s not Thanksgiving yet. My mom had already gone out back to start a bonfire for fun (she does that). Come Thursday, I hope to have four people at the controls, firmly commanding our makeshift time machine.

Happy Thanksgiving, everybody.

The Polycade - Retro Arcade of the Future

The arcade is the ultimate casual gaming experience. Arcades are social, low commitment, and perfect for either playing solo or competing with friends. Sadly, due to their failure to evolve with the times, arcades are becoming a rarity.

The classic arcade has a few problems. It only plays a single game, it s heavy and takes up a lot of space, and it doesn t fit aesthetically into many home or business spaces. I built the Polycade to solve all of these problems, and I realized that there are likely others out there who want the same thing: an elegant, minimalistic arcade that plays multiple games.

Polycade features include:

- One 4-directional joystick for classic titles

Two 8-directional joysticks for multiplayer
At the size of a standard arcade machine, the Polycade fits nicely in any home or office
The Polycade ships with over 90 games, and is capable of playing thousands more!

As children of Nolan Bushnell, founder of Atari, my siblings and I grew up surrounded by video games. We had a few arcade machines at home (Pengo, DK Jr., Breakout), and we would save up to buy systems and games as they came out. Additionally, my dad had all kinds of nooks where various treasures were stored, waiting to be discovered. We even stumbled upon a Vectrex, found stashed away in a closet we had to crawl to get into. When Street Fighter 2 first came out in arcade form, we would ride our bikes six miles to the closest arcade. As time went on, systems and games broke, were foolishly sold, or were simply lost. Even the DK Jr. cabinet that we held onto for so many years eventually broke.

It became increasingly apparent that keeping and maintaining old systems, especially arcades, is a job for museums, hard-core collectors, or bars. I am none of those things. But I still wanted to play these games. I needed a dedicated solution that works for most retro games.

To me, the arcade is the ultimate casual gaming interface. It s always on, it doesn t share its screen with anything else, and it has an extremely low barrier of commitment. That last point might be the most important. With a dedicated arcade, I don t need to play Setup Quest - searching for controllers, making sure batteries are charged, downloading and installing updates, limiting the use of the living room television for others - in order to hammer out a quick game of Pac-Man.

Building the first Polycade took almost a year of design, research, and testing. I even ended up writing a script to manage files and scrape metadata. Throughout this process, it became clear to me that even for those who have the technical skills to build something similar, the needed investment of time and money keeps the arcade out of reach. Also, most people assume the only way to have a home arcade is to have a dedicated room filled with vintage machines. I want to change that.

Want to give a Polycade as a gift for Christmas? We will send you a snazzy card to put under the tree prior to the 25th!

The Polycade is constructed out of simple components. This makes it easy to customize, repair, or change parts. A bit more about the key components of the Polycade:

The Cabinet

The cabinet is cut out by robots and constructed by professional cabinet makers. Most of us would-be arcade builders are capable of sticking some plywood together, but even the experienced amongst us will be hard pressed to match the quality of these pros.

Once constructed and sanded, the cabinet is primed and sanded again. What happens next depends on the finish you choose.

- Vinyl Graphics: the Polycade is professionally wrapped with high quality, printed vinyl.

- Solid Color Paint: the Polycade is painted using a professional spray gun, sanded, painted again. The paint used is a strong, glossy lacquer that protects from bumps and keeps fingerprints hidden.

The control panel of the Polycade is removable. This helps to future-proof the polycade by allowing you to swap out the control setup to optimize for your favorite games, if need be. Down the road, we will offer different control panels.

The Controls

The Polycade features a standard 2 player "fighter" setup, as well as a single player "classic" setup. The classic setup is necessary for games such as Pac-Man and Dig-Dug, while the fighter setup is used for most other games.

The Monitor

The Polycade uses a 28" Insignia LED TV with a 60Hz refresh rate. In the event you want to swap this out for a different monitor, the mounting mechanism in the cabinet is adjustable.

The Hardware

The Polycade uses a Raspberry Pi 2 Model B (this is the latest Raspberry Pi). It comes with an 8g SD card pre-loaded with the software. An 8g SD card is capable of holding thousands of games from the systems listed below.

The Software

We load the SD card with open source emulation software using a modified RetroPie install. We are customizing the interface along with hand testing and configuring each game to ensure that everything works right out of the box. If you want to put additional games on it, here’s a list of systems we have tested:

    Atari 800
    Atari 2600
    Game Boy Advance
    Game Boy Color
    Game Gear
    Sega Master System
    Sega Genesis
    Nintendo Entertainment System
    Turbo Grafx 16
    Super Nintendo Entertainment System

Servicing

All of the components in the Polycade are simple and will last a long time. Everything fails eventually though, and we’ve made sure that each piece is as easy to swap out as possible. Replacing a button, joystick, or even the computer is a trivial task, even for the non-technically inclined person.

We stand by this product and will do our very best to help you, should you run into any problems.

Mounting the Polycade (45lbs) is similar to mounting a TV. The cabinet ships with a double cleat that mounts to the wall using four screws driven into studs. The screwholes are slotted so the cleat can be slid left or right prior to tightening. The Polycade sits 3/8" out from the wall. This gives it a floating effect, and allows us to place ventilation on the back of the unit, out of view.

Each Polycade will be finished with a high-quality, solid color paint.

Another option for finishing is a vinyl wrap with some awesome graphics! We've got a few more options for graphics on the way.

POLYCADE APPAREL

All clothing is American Apparel.

WOODWORKERS KIT

The woodworkers kit is intended for people who wish to build their own cabinet. You might want to do this in order to save money, or because you wish to design your own cabinet and want the technical portion of the arcade done for you. We do not include the monitor with the woodworkers kit, as someone designing their own cabinet may wish to change the monitor size. With the woodworkers kit, you will receive:

- Polycade Plans (in case you want to build the Polycade cabinet)
- Instructions for hooking up the electronics
- Polycade controls (buttons and joysticks)
- Raspberry Pi computer configured with the Polycade software build
- Wire harness (to connect the computer to the controls)
- Nearly 100 games

Some things that you will need to provide on your own (these things are NOT included in the kit):

- The wood necessary to build the cabinet
- The tools necessary to build the cabinet
- The monitor (we will provide suggestions)
- Extension cord with 2 outlets
- Anything else that you might use in the building of your cabinet (marquee, lights, etc)

SIGNED ATARI 2600 CARTRIDGE

For the record, I'll be filming the signing (it will be placed on youtube) and providing a certificate of authenticity for each one of these. I'll ask you for your top 3 cartridge choices, and will do my best to get you one of those.

GAME LIST

The Polycade will ship with the following games:

Pac-Man
Ms. Pac-Man
Galaga
Dig Dug
Galaxian
Pole Position
Rolling Thunder
Rally-X
Bosconian
Dragon Spirit
Sky Kid
Xevious
Mappy
1942
1943: Battle of Midway
1943 Kai
Bionic Commando
Commando
Exed Exes
Final Fight
Forgotten Worlds
Ghosts’n Goblins
Gun.Smoke
Legendary Wings
Mercs
Pirate Ship Hingemaru
Section Z
SonSon
Street Fighter II: The World Warrior
Street Fighter II: Champion Edition
Street Fighter II: Hyper Fighting
Super Ghouls’n Ghosts
Trojan
Vulgus
Asteroids
Asteroids Delux
Battlezone
Centipede
Crystal Castles
Gravitar
Millipede
Missile Command
Pong
Super Breakout
Tempest
Warlords
Golden Axe
Altered Beast
Comix Zone
Ecco The Dolphin
Gain Ground
Shinobi III: Return of the Ninja Master
Vectorman
Sonic The Hedghog
Crack Down
Space Harrier II
Ecco Jr.
Fatal Labrynth
Alex Kidd in the Enchanted Castle

Bonanza Bros
Super Thunder Blade
ESWAT: City Under Siege
Kid Chameleon
Ristar
Golden Axe 2
Galaxy Force II
Columns
Sonic The Hedghog 2
Bio-Hazard Battle
Columns III: Revenge of Columns
Sword of Vermillion
Virtua Fighter 2
Ecco: The Tides of Time
Alien Storm
Decap Attack
Flicky
Sonic 3 & Knucles
Sonic Spinball
Landstalker
Shining Force
Wonder Boy III: Monster Lair
Dr. Robotnik’s Mean Bean Machine
Streets of Rage
Streets of Rage 2
Alien Soldier
Light Crusader
Sonic 3D Blast
Gunstar Heroes
Shining Force II
Shining in the Darkness
ToeJam & Earl
ToeJam & Earl in Panic on Funktron

Our ultimate goal is to provide easy access to games that have slipped away from the consumer reach due to the lack of a marketplace, failure of old hardware, or simply swallowed by the sands of time.

Keep track of our progress by following us on twitter (@thepolycade) & instagram (@polycade)!

FAQ

Have a question? If the info above doesn’t help, you can ask the project creator directly.

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A-ONE’s Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Did Anonymous Just Save The World From ISIL?

Last week, a new cyber front emerged in the war against the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). Anonymous, the hacker collective principally known for its website defacements and account takedowns for political causes, initiated #OpParis, aimed at defeating ISIL online. This is not the first Anonymous campaign against ISIL. Their previous foray several months back, more obviously named #OpISIS, failed to cultivate a strong following or endure. But Anonymous hackers, likely bearing witness to ISIL violence in European neighborhoods in which many likely roost, have energized their legion and drawn interest from media outlets.

Reactions to #OpParis are mixed. It is encouraging to see the collective take on a noble goal in contrast to many of their other campaigns that vary in merit. Everyone hates ISIL and Anonymous has skills. Why shouldn t the hacker collective join in a campaign to root out evil? And who better for Anonymous to challenge than a terrorist group that so prolifically uses the Internet to radicalize and recruit their foreign fighters and social media fan boys.

Thus far, Anonymous primary modus operandi has been to take down ISIL social media accounts and initiate Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS) attacks on key terrorist forums. This immediately raises several issues.

Facebook, Twitter, YouTube and many other social media companies policed ISIL accounts much more aggressively this year. ISIL social media accounts today have a short life span and the effects of continued shutdowns have stunted the group s propaganda dissemination. So a question naturally arises: Do we need Anonymous to do account shutdowns at this point?

Another clear problem with Anonymous campaign seems to be their targeting. Anonymous claims to have shut down 20,000 ISIL Twitter accounts. Yet J.M Berger, who at the height of ISIL s online presence conducted the ISIS Twitter Census, estimated there to be roughly 46,000 ISIL Twitter accounts in November 2014. Seeing how social media companies have opened an assault on ISIS accounts this past year, it appears doubtful that 20,000 ISIL Twitter accounts still remain. J.M. Berger, when queried about the claim of 20,000 account takedowns, stated, I can t vouch for it, but I can t totally rule it out. It seems unlikely. Thus, a second question arises: How does Anonymous know they are targeting ISIL accounts? While the collective clearly brings a wide range of computer skills to the fight, their understanding of terrorism is probably lacking. Combined with the fact that the majority of Anonymous members reside in Europe and North America, it seems doubtful the collective retains sufficient Arabic language skills for properly vetting accounts.

Assuming the collective lacks appropriate counterterrorism research skills and linguistic capabilities, Anonymous must then fall back on technical signatures, like hashtags and keywords to find ISIL accounts. These methods are highly unreliable. In a past campaign against extremists, hackers targeted any website and account using the word jihad . Several key research websites used by academics and researchers for studying and developing methods to counter terrorists were taken offline. Without the ability to

nimbly identify and accurately assess ISIL accounts, forums and content, the Anonymous campaign will likely result in a lot of digital collateral damage. Their account shutdown carpet bombing campaigns thus far seem to be doing just that. Less than a week into #OpParis, most of the accounts targeted by the collective have nothing to do with ISIL.

Recklessly shutting down social media accounts and closing jihadist forums likely blunts many Western intelligence efforts to infiltrate the group. As arrests have unfolded across France and Belgium, law enforcement and intelligence services have likely relied on undercover social media accounts and forum infiltrations to track down key associates of the Paris attackers and intercept communications about rapidly unfolding plots. Infiltrating these forums can take months and years, a sizeable investigative investment that may be squandered by indiscriminate youngsters who believe they are doing good when they may be actually doing more harm.

Anonymous hacker skills would be of more value if they focused on infiltration and penetration rather than account and forum shutdowns. Hackers in the past have penetrated governments and corporations revealing internal documents and communications. Should hackers focus on ISIL forum administrators, the accounts of key ISIL leaders, and their encrypted communications, Anonymous could expose the group s inner workings, reveal operational vulnerabilities, illuminate petty terrorist infighting and erode the groups support from international audiences.

Fortunately, a faction of Anonymous seems to be moving in this direction. Ghost Security Group has directed its efforts in just this way seeking to infiltrate, monitor and report rather than destroy ISIL online. DigataShadow, the executive director of the group, told CNN that they have a lot of counterterrorism experience. We have translators, linguists, research analysts on hand to analyze all the data that we receive. DigataShadow noted the concerns outlined above: Anonymous has a habit of shooting in every direction and asking questions later. The same might be said for ISIL. The two groups seem perfect for each other.

Looking at the bigger picture, Anonymous, as a collective, has been on a downward path for some time. Being anonymous by design, their crew has been vulnerable to infiltration. Their networks have been infiltrated, betrayed from within, and fractured from infighting over direction and fame. This weekend again showed the challenges of trusting Anonymous even when they might have achieved a victory. On Saturday night, an alleged Anonymous account published seven locations and events in five countries that ISIL was planning to attack on Sunday. Media outlets initially attributed the list to Anonymous, but shortly after, Anonymous official Twitter account stated, We did not spread rumors about possible future ISIS attacks, and frankly, we do not know where the rumors come from.

As cyberwar has expanded, there has been increasing convergence between threat actors. Internet anonymity has allowed nation-states, terror groups, and hackers to swarm together and either deliberately or inadvertently use one another to achieve their goals. When no one knows who is in Anonymous, it becomes an excellent vehicle for a nation-state with ulterior motives to leak

intelligence or disseminate propaganda to manipulate their adversaries. As law enforcement scrambled to evaluate the validity of the leaked targets and the plausibility of another wave of ISIL attacks, the alleged Anonymous claim s validity cannot be confirmed, and may ultimately prove false and only divert precious resources from other meaningful leads. It is possible, though not likely, that ISIL released the list and in so doing, engaged in a form of terrorism without firing a shot.

Of most concern may be that Anonymous efforts, while well intentioned, have drawn the ire of ISIL hackers and propagandists. Terrorist groups have generally trailed other threat actors on the cyber battlefield, but ISIL has changed this trend. Over the past year, ISIL has attempted to create and utilize its own app for communication and dissemination seeking to bypass openly available platforms and their content controls. Anonymous successes in shutting down a few social media accounts have resulted in ISIL issuing a cyber operational security manual and updated guidance to train their supporters on how to protect their accounts from penetration. Then, this past Sunday, in the worst outcome yet from the Anonymous campaign, ISIL retaliated by publishing a targeting list of the names and addresses of current and former CIA and FBI agents in the United States. It may therefore be that the most significant result of the Anonymous campaign is better ISIL cyber capabilities.

Anonymous, in its fight against ISIL, has its collective heart in the right place. #OpISIS before this and now #OpParis will ultimately prove a useful case study in the advance of cyber proxy forces, in this instance a proxy for good rather than bad. The challenges of hacker collective targeting, attribution and direction should be explored and evaluated comparatively to traditional warfare s utilization of militias and para-militaries. If nothing else, we ve learned that while ISIL tends to be disgusting and vitriolic, at least Anonymous retains a sense of humor. They have returned one of their classic tactics, Rick Rolling ISIL accounts flooding ISIL hashtags with Rick Astley s Never Gonna Give You Up music video. Just remember, if you re surfing Twitter this week, and you get Rick Rolled, a hacker somewhere might be thinking you re part of ISIL.

FBI: 1.2 Billion Logins Stolen By A Single Hacker

A computer hacker known as mr.grey is wanted by the FBI for stealing the login information for over 1.2 billion online accounts, reports the BBC.

The hacker was linked to the stolen logins through a Russian email address.

To the best of our knowledge, they mostly focused on stealing credentials, eventually ending up with the largest cache of stolen personal information, totaling over 1.2 billion unique sets of e-mails and passwords, said American cyber security firm Hold Security.

The company said the Russian crime ring responsible for stealing

the data, called CyberVor, breached more than 420,000 websites.

Dave Palmer, director of technology at security firm Darktrace, said the accounts were hacked through botnets, large networks of computers linked together to perform malicious activity.

What s interesting about this is botnets are usually used to harness their massive scale to attack an individual target like taking computer games consoles down last Christmas for example, he explained. It s instead been used as a massive scanner scanning websites all around the world for weaknesses.

Palmer added that by adding simple security tools to most websites, such attacks can usually be thwarted.

Gmail Bug Makes It Insanely Easy To Impersonate Other People s Email Accounts

Want to impersonate another person s email account? It s shockingly easy to do, as a new Gmail bug reported by independent security researcher Yan Zhu reveals. Speaking with Motherboard, Zhu explains that all you have to do is to change your display name in your settings on the official Gmail app in a way that will conceal your actual email address.

In this instance, Zhu entered in security@google.com as her display name in Gmail. Note that she used two sets of quotation marks at the start of it apparently, doing this will cover up your actual email address and make it look like the email you re sending is coming directly from Google s own security team. Obviously this is something that can be used in phishing attacks by people impersonating different entities and organizations that ask you to send them sensitive information.

OK, so Google must be all over this, right? Sadly, no. Zhu informed Google of this bug late last month and they responded by telling her that they don t consider this bug to be a security vulnerability.

This is a puzzling attitude. As Motherboard explains, it s always been possible to spoof email envelope addresses, but spoofed emails now usually get caught by spam filters or get displayed with a warning in Gmail with this bug, a hacker can get around these protections. And even if Google doesn t consider this to be a critical security vulnerability, what would be the harm in fixing it?

University Says FBI Payment Reports ’Inaccurate’

Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) says reports it was paid by the FBI to attack software sometimes used for criminal activity are "inaccurate".

The Tor web browser is designed to let people anonymously explore

websites, including those hidden on the dark web which do not show up in search engines.

Last week the Tor project claimed that the FBI had paid CMU to find vulnerabilities in its software.

On Wednesday, the university said that was "inaccurate".

In 2014, the Tor network detected a concerted effort to work out the identity of people using the platform.

That attack was linked to CMU after two of its researchers said they would give a talk at the Black Hat cybersecurity conference on a method they found to "de-anonymise hundreds of thousands Tor clients and thousands of hidden services".

The talk was cancelled, but later the same year a big FBI operation took down dozens of Tor sites, including Silk Road 2 which was a notorious marketplace selling drugs.

The Tor project has since suggested that the FBI paid the university $1m (£660,000) to carry out the research.

Last week the university was non-committal on the accusations and told the BBC: "You can read what you want into it."

On Wednesday it issued a statement and said there had been a number of "inaccurate media reports" on its work in cybersecurity.

CMU said it did have a federally funded research centre which investigated software security, but that it did not receive funding in exchange for information.

"The university from time to time is served with subpoenas requesting information about research it has performed," said the statement. "The university abides by the rule of law, complies with lawfully issued subpoenas and receives no funding for its compliance."

However it has still not denied it was paid by the FBI to conduct research into Tor.

Even if the FBI had not paid the university to carry out specific research, the Tor project has raised questions about the ethics of CMU’s investigation.

It has been suggested that the FBI could have ordered CMU to hand over its methods, or the identities of Tor users it had uncovered as a result of its research.

"Whatever academic security research should be in the 21st century, it certainly does not include "experiments" for pay that indiscriminately endanger strangers without their knowledge or consent," the Tor project wrote in its blog.

Google Receives Steady Stream of ’Right To Be Forgotten’ Requests

Google continues to receive a steady stream of requests to delist specific search results as a result of a controversial European court ruling.

The company said Wednesday it has received 348,085 requests since it launched its program after the European Court of Justice's ruling in May 2014. That's up from about 300,000 it had received by the end of July.

The court's ruling allows people to ask search engines to delist results to content that is inadequate, irrelevant or not in the public interest, the so-called "right to be forgotten."

The search engine can decide whether to scrub the results or not based on the circumstances. Google provided some anonymized examples of how it handled certain requests.

In Austria, a couple that was accused of business fraud asked for links to articles to be removed, which Google rejected.

But it did remove a link to pages referencing an article about a teacher in Germany who was convicted of a minor crime more than a decade ago.

The top websites where search results to content were removed were in order: Facebook.com, profileengine.com, groups.google.com, youtube.com and badoo.com. Twitter also made the top 10 list.

Since May 2014, a total of 1,234,092 URLs have been removed, Google said. It tends to reject more requests than it accommodates.

When links are removed from its index, Google notifies the websites that are affected, but those sites are not required to remove content.

Some of the more clear-cut cases for Google are websites that contain a person's address or contact information or crimes committed while a person was a minor, according to an FAQ.

The process isn't alway smooth, and Google has occasionally clashed with data protection authorities.

The U.K.'s Information Commissioner's Office ordered Google in August to remove links to articles that described URLs it had removed. The company maintained the articles were in the public's interest.

France's data protection authority ordered Google in June to remove results from all localized versions of its search engine, which would make the content in question invisible worldwide, at least using Google's search engine.

Google is fighting that order, contending it could have a chilling effect on free speech.

Updates to Chrome Platform Support

Earlier this year, we announced that Google Chrome would continue support for Windows XP through the remainder of 2015. At that time, we strongly encouraged users on older, unsupported platforms such as Windows XP to update to a supported, secure operating system. Such older platforms are missing critical security updates and have a greater potential to be infected by viruses and malware.

Today, we re announcing the end of Chrome s support for Windows XP, as well as Windows Vista, and Mac OS X 10.6, 10.7, and 10.8, since these platforms are no longer actively supported by Microsoft and Apple. Starting April 2016, Chrome will continue to function on these platforms but will no longer receive updates and security fixes.

If you are still on one of these unsupported platforms, we encourage you to move to a newer operating system to ensure that you continue to receive the latest Chrome versions and features.

Posted by Marc Pawliger, Director of Engineering and Early Notifier

Mozilla Claims That Firefox Does Not Depend On Google s Money Anymore

Non-profit organization Mozilla once relied on Google for all of its revenue, but the company has revealed that it does not get a single cent from Google any more. In fact, as CNET reported, Mozilla makes enough revenue from other companies to ensure that it does not need the millions of dollars which Google provided Mozilla with. Mozilla relies on traffic-related revenue and fixed payments to earn search-related income.

Mozilla revealed that new deals with other search engine deals actually rake in more money for it, even though most of Mozilla s $330 million in revenue came from Google in 2014. Google is now a subsidiary of Alphabet Inc (NASDAQ:GOOG) and the continuous diversification of Google s services mean that Mozilla wants to rely on dedicated search engines to get the job done. Mozilla switched away from Google towards the end of last year.

Mozilla has since overlooked Google s global deal for region specific deals; the company partnered with Yahoo! Inc. in the US, Yandex in Russia and Baidu in China, while Google still remains Firefox s default search engine in Europe. Mozilla’s chief business and legal officer, Denelle Dixon-Thayer, pointed out that Mozilla did not currently enjoy any commercial relationship with Google Inc. She said that Mozilla wanted to boost competition with the move.

In some ways, Mozilla wants to promote net neutrality by ensuring that tech giants such as Apple and Google (who run the Safari and Chrome browsers respectively) do not give preference to results which unnecessarily favor the giants. Mozilla felt that it would

be able to offer customers more choices by becoming a self-reliant browser, even though the company has, overall, had a very positive relationship with Google.

Jim Cook, Mozilla s Chief Financial Officer, revealed that the company expected to rake in even more revenue this year due to strong search deals with other partners. As CNET pointed out, Mozilla still ensures that the company has enough money to attract talent by the end of 2014, Mozilla recorded a $20 million increase from the previous year to ensure that it had $270 million in cash and cash equivalents. The company benefits from the work of over 10,000 volunteers across the globe, while employing over 1,000 people from all over the world.

Mozilla has overall been expanding, and the company even has its own Firefox OS, which can be installed on Android phones. The company even released Firefox for iOS users, but it has not yet had the desired impact. Apple and Google have their own smartphones and are recognizable brand names in the tech space, ensuring that their respective browsers get more exposure as opposed to Firefox. Firefox, for its part, has tried to counter that; but perhaps the solution lies in launching its own smartphone?

Mozilla s aim is to provide users with unrestricted access to the internet. Being a nonprofit organisation, there is only so much that Firefox can really do. That said, it is refreshing to see a company which does not need a tech giant s support to function.

Google Is Relaunching the Struggling Google+ Social Network

After slowly dismantling its struggling social network, the company is relaunching Google+ with a new look and an emphasis on ways to join interest groups, called Communities, and group posts by topics, called Collections.

Google says that the new site is much simpler and geared towards helping people connect with other like-minded users and discover content about their interests.

Collections let you immerse yourself in content about topics like surfing (goo.gl/vvv5QD) or tiny tilt-shift photography scenes (goo.gl/nWyicL), product manager Luke Wroblewski writes on Google Plus. Communities enable groups of people with the same interests to join up and geek out on anything from Game of Thrones (goo.gl/aaqtgq) to Painting (goo.gl/kmlM7m).

This move comes not long after Google broke out the social network s photo product and also decoupled it from YouTube.

Bradley Horowitz, the man leading the social network, told TechCrunch that Google+ relaunch is essentially the company ripping the social network down and then building it back up.

For now, you have to opt-into the new version, but eventually it will be rolled out to all users.

Li-Fi Internet: First Real-World Usage Boasts Speed 100 Times Faster Than Wi-Fi

Li-Fi, a super-fast alternative to Wi-Fi, is finally moving from research labs to the real world after an Estonian startup implemented the technology within a commercial context. Velmenni, a recent finalist at the Slush 100 startup competition in Helsinki, revealed that it has begun trialling the technology within offices and industrial environments in Tallinn.

The Li-Fi technology used by Velmenni in the pilots is able to send data at up to 1GBps - more than 100-times faster than current Wi-Fi technologies. At these speeds, a high-definition film could be downloaded in just a few seconds.

Li-Fi is a wireless technology similar to Wi-Fi that allows data to be sent at high speeds using visible light communication (VLC). Invented by Professor Harald Haas from the University of Edinburgh, Li-Fi has several advantages over Wi-Fi.

Li-Fi allows for greater security on local networks as light cannot pass through walls, which also means there is less interference between devices. Perhaps the most significant advantage is the speed that the technology offers. Researchers have achieved speeds of 224 gigabits per second in lab conditions.

We are doing a few pilot projects within different industries where we can utilise the VLC (visible light communication) technology, Deepak Solanki, CEO of Velmenni, told IBTimes UK. Currently we have designed a smart lighting solution for an industrial environment where the data communication is done through light. We are also doing a pilot project with a private client where we are setting up a Li-Fi network to access the internet in their office space.

While Li-Fi may not completely replace Wi-Fi, the technologies could be used in parallel to create more efficient networks. The success of the pilot projects could see Li-Fi technology rolled out for consumers within the next three to four years, according to Solanki, allowing people to access the internet using the light bulbs in their home.

Before mass adoption of Li-Fi can be realised, techniques need to be developed to retrofit current devices with the technology. It is very difficult to create a whole new infrastructure for Li-Fi so somehow we need integrate our system with the current system, Solanki said.

The inventor of Li-Fi, Professor Harald Haas from the University of Edinburgh, has previously claimed that in the future every LED lightbulb could be used as an ultra-fast alternative to Wi-Fi. In a TED talk describing the technology, Haas said that current infrastructure was suitable for the integration of Li-Fi.

All we need to do is fit a small microchip to every potential

illumination device and this would then combine two basic functionalities: illumination and wireless data transmission, Haas said. In the future we will not only have 14 billion light bulbs, we may have 14 billion Li-Fis deployed worldwide for a cleaner, greener and even brighter future.

This $5 Computer Sold Out in A Day

Raspberry Pi has raised the bar on low-cost computing again.

The UK-based educational nonprofit released a new, tiny computer on Thursday for $5, the Raspberry Pi Zero, and sold out of it online within a day.

That’s $30 cheaper than its original Raspberry Pi model, which went on sale in 2012. And $4 less than the CHIP, which raised more than $2 million on Kickstarter earlier this year.

"We were amazed at the rush on stores that happened as soon as we announced the release," Liz Upton, Raspberry Pi’s head of communications, told CNNMoney in an email.

Raspberry Pi even gave away 10,000 devices for free with a copy of its December magazine, The MagPi. Issues of the magazine are now sold out too.

"More Zeroes are being built at the moment and we’ll keep making them, but we think it’s going to be a little while before we’ll be able to keep up with demand!" Upton said.

So why all the fuss?

The Raspberry Pi made a name for itself as the maker of the world’s smallest and cheapest computer in 2012. Essentially, Raspberry Pi computers are just motherboards that can be built to power robots, and used to create connected devices.

Like the foundation’s first two products, the Raspberry Pi Zero is intended mainly to help people learn to program computers in an affordable way.

Upton says all the profits "go straight back into free learning resources, training teachers, running Code Clubs and getting kids involved with computing."

The Raspberry Pi Zero is smaller than a mustard packet and light enough to be held up by two Lego figures.

To use it, you’ll have to add your own monitor, keyboard, power source and data storage, via a micro-SD card slot.

But with a 1-gigahertz processor and 512 megabytes of RAM, it packs as much computing power as the iPhone 4. There’s even a mini-HDMI socket so you can play HD videos.

The mini-computer runs a version of Linux called Raspbian, as well as applications that teach coding skills - such as

Minecraft, Scratch and Sonic Pi.

Over the past few years, Raspberry Pi has spawned a number of other low-cost computers that help teach people how to program and code.

Kano, for example, is a build-it-yourself computer kit that actually uses Raspberry Pi as its brains.

Oxford Dictionaries Chooses An Emoji for Its 2015 Word of the Year

In a move that leaves us all a little [Confused Face emoji], Oxford s much-celebrated annual Word of the Year award for 2015 goes to this:

Oxford s choice of the Face with Tears of Joy emoji marks the first time the institution has chosen a pictograph as its Word of the Year. Of course, if we get another year or two of picks that are in fact not words, there could be petitions for Oxford to change the name of the award to something more appropriate.

In a blog post defending its selection, Oxford Dictionaries explained that [Face with Tears of Joy emoji] was chosen as the word that best reflected the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015. Attached research informs us that, although emojis have been around since the late 1990s, they experienced their greatest increase in usage ever in 2015; Face with Tears of Joy accounted for a whopping 17 percent of all emoji shared in the U.S. this year.

Among the actual words bested by the winning emoji: sharing economy, Dark Web, and ad blocker.

Considering the growing popularity and importance of emoji in everyday communications, you can t call Oxford s proclamation any kind of jump the shark moment for the language as a whole. As for the venerable Word of the Year award itself, however, that may be another story. [Smirking Face emoji].

Why I ve Accepted Defeat and Embraced Emojis, Emoticons, and Smileys

For many, many years I refused to use emoticons. I was a hard case, an old man, a prideful English major with a chip on my shoulder the size of a continental shelf.

Even after email and texting had become by far the primary communication vectors in my day-to-day life, I insisted on proper grammar and capitalization in all electronic dispatches. There would be no effing sideways smiley faces in my correspondence.

Alas, I have recently and reluctantly abandoned my steely resolve. I feel defeated, to a degree, but also strangely liberated. It s sort of like being a Detroit Lions fan. Once you learn to accept the relentless losses, you realize that the universe is simply

aligned against you and your chosen cause.

It was the king of emoticons the smiley face that finally broke my will. Because the terrible truth is that, in the realm of email and texting, the smiley face is frequently useful and sometimes straight-up necessary.

Tone is famously difficult to impart in email. Like a lot of people, I suspect, I got into plenty of trouble in the early days by trying to deliver deadpan jokes electronically. In fact, I almost got fired once when irony wasn t successfully transmitted in an email (which would have been ironic). Text is an unreliable platform for communicating sarcasm or irony, I d always thought. You can t wink. You can t smile.

Except, with the advent of emoticons, you suddenly could and, in fact, everybody was. But that stupid smiley face was too broad, and I wasn t about to learn some arcane code of lateral semicolons to approximate sideways winking or whatever.

The unrelenting cascade of incoming emoticons finally broke my will, and I started occasionally, warily putting smiley faces at the end of select messages. The final nail in the coffin came earlier this week when Oxford Dictionaries long the unofficial arbiter of proper English usage chose an emoji as its 2015 Word of the Year. This one:

That s right not the word emoji. But an emoji.

On the off chance you re unaware, emojis are like the next evolutionary step of emoticons. They re actual pictures instead of adjacent keyboard symbols, but their function is essentially the same. Emoji refers to a system of digital ideograms initially developed in Japan in the late 1990s the term translates roughly to picture plus character. It s similar to the English word emoticon, but the resemblance is actually coincidental. Emoticon is a portmanteau of emotion and icon.

Oxford refers to its Word of the Year-winning emoji as Face With Tears of Joy. According to research conducted in partnership with the mobile tech company SwiftKey, it s the single most popular emoji used worldwide. Oxford Dictionaries official statement declares that the emoji was chosen as the word that best reflected the ethos, mood, and preoccupations of 2015.

Well, that s it then, isn t it? When Oxford Dictionaries Word of the Year is not actually a word, then the fight is officially over. The living language wins again. The living language always wins.

Look, I know when I m beat. Let me just say for the record that I, for one, welcome our new ideogrammatic overlords. Insert Face With Tears of Joy. Thank you.

Facebook Wants To Make It Easier To Handle Break-ups

This is a bit of an odd one, but Facebook is beginning to try out some new tools that it believes may help improve your experience following a break up. That's right, Facebook is testing ways to show you less of an ex-partners information and updates without you needing to unfriend them. Once you change your relationship status, Facebook will prompt you with the new set of tools.

With these, you'll be able to limit how much of the ex you see in just a few taps. You'll be able to select to see them anywhere on Facebook, like you normally would, or limit how much you see them. With the limited option, you'll only see something if you visit their profile. You won't see status updates, profile changes, etc. unless you visit specifically. In addition, you'll be able to limit how much they can see, by allowing full access or hiding all your posts.

Finally, you'll be able to limit who can change and edit previous posts and tags. You'll be able to keep things as they are, edit them individually, or edit everything that you are tagged in. These tools are being tested now in the US on mobile, and based upon feedback, Facebook plans to continue the expansion in the future.

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